



Integrating Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences into Classrooms



Report from the 2005 Chesapeake Bay Program Education Summit



The 2005 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit was a success with many informative panels and active participation from over 120 participants – an increase of over 20% over previous Summits. The 2005 Education Summit focused on developing plans for implementing MWEEs, and had the goal of assisting “emerging school districts” in systematically incorporating experiential learning activities into their curriculum. For participants newly involved in the effort, the summit provided an opportunity to become familiar with the available environmental education providers in their jurisdiction and with the *Chesapeake 2000* commitment that students participate in a MWEE prior to graduation. For those more seasoned, it was an opportunity to discuss major issues and barriers to implementation associated with achieving the commitment.

Attendees participated in interactive panels, toured nearly 30 exhibits, attended state specific funding workshops, and took part in regional and state policy discussions. During the Summit, teams of educators, environmental education providers and government officials came together to develop implementation plans for the emerging school districts and many new partnerships were formed.

A Leadership Forum was hosted in conjunction with the Summit, which was tasked with outlining the future goals of Chesapeake Bay watershed education. The Leadership Forum focused on the progress, challenges, and next steps to achieve the MWEE commitment. The first comprehensive regional look at MWEE tracking results, detailing comparable data from each jurisdiction that demonstrated the progress in implementing MWEEs with concrete numbers, was presented to at the Leadership Forum.

Summit Details

Welcoming remarks to Summit participants were given by Rebecca Hanmer, Director of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office and Dr. Douglas Austin, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. The keynote address came from Cathleen Myers, Deputy Secretary for Water Management of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Based on feedback from previous Summits, all presentations were organized in panels addressing issues related to successful MWEE implementation. Panel discussions centered on what worked with each program, what did not work and how such programs could be developed within local school districts. Panels included schoolyard and outdoor classrooms programs, providing students on-the-water and on-the-land experiences, community education and restoration programs that improve the local environment, and headwaters education programs. The panels addressed topics related to:

- Advanced teacher training in environmental education
- Aligning MWEEs with state standards
- Demonstrating how MWEEs are easily integrated into the classroom
- Making a long-term investment in environmental stewardship
- Depicting MWEEs as multi-disciplinary

Plenary sessions focused on:

- *Chesapeake Bay Program teaching resources:* This presentation highlighted the NOAA B-WET Program, the NPS Gateways Network, the FWS Schoolyard Habitat Program, and the newly launched ChART website. Chesapeake Academic Resources for Teachers (ChART) is a resource designed to help educators provide meaningful watershed educational experiences to their students. ChART provides educators with one place to find Bay-related lesson plans and activities, field studies and professional development opportunities.
- *National Geographic resources on the Chesapeake Bay:* Guest speaker Robert Dulli, Deputy to the Chairman of the National Geographic Society, highlighted exciting new resources available specifically for educators in the Chesapeake Bay, and presented a sneak preview of an NGS film about the John Smith Water Trail.
- *General Policy Issues:* State Department of Education representatives held a plenary addressing the *No Child Left Behind Act*, student achievement related to MWEEs, the Environment Integrated Context (EIC) model of learning and the Green Schools program.

Teams of jurisdictional representatives conducted funding and resource workshops with participants from their locales. Representatives from local funding agencies discussed how to get grants for projects, and presented school teams with applications to receive “seed” money specifically designated for them. Teams also used this time to ask specific questions of their local service providers, DOE representatives and others to help further develop individual MWEE implementation plans.

National Geographic Education Summit

An intentional tie was made between the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Summit held in October and the National Geographic Summit for Chesapeake Bay Education held in November. All Summit participants were invited to attend the National Geographic Society’s Education Summit. At the National Geographic Summit representatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, Jamestown Commission, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Conservation Fund and National Geographic came together with key education leaders from across the Bay watershed to participate in panels addressing the Jamestown 2007 anniversary, new directions and technologies in the education arena, and current education practices throughout the Bay watershed. At this Summit, the governors of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission signed a *Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship Agreement* (Appendix B).

The insights gained from these summits will greatly help the Education Workgroup to further their successes and to focus their energy on the areas needed to provide all students in the watershed with a meaningful Bay and stream outdoor experience.